

March 12, 2022

To the Honorable Chairs Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am writing **in support of** the following bill:

- S.B. No. 387: AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

I am writing **in opposition to** the following bills:

- S.B. No. 365: AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORMS
- S.B. No. 388: AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEFENSE OF A PERSON OR A PERSON'S DWELLING, PLACE OF WORK OR MOTOR VEHICLE
- H.B. No. 5418: AN ACT REVISING JUVENILE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE STATUTES AND INSURANCE STATUTES CONCERNING THEFT OF A MOTOR VEHICLE
- S.B. No. 392: AN ACT CONCERNING STATEMENTS MADE BY JUVENILES
- H.B. No. 5417: AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE JUSTICE AND SERVICES AND FIREARMS BACKGROUND CHECKS
- S.B. No. 386: AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF THE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY LAWS OF THIS STATE

My name is William Marut. I am affiliated with Hartford Friends (also known as Quakers). I am also affiliated with Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA).

I am writing to you about an issue that is important to me because what I see happening is that people in the suburbs are clamoring for action, based on anecdotal evidence, news bites, misinformation, incomplete information, and unsound analysis, and I want you to know that there are people in the suburbs, like myself, who are well enough informed to not push for knee-jerk responses to a misinformation campaign about a rise in crime in CT being committed by youth.

Here are specifics on why I oppose the aforementioned bills:

- The Juvenile Justice System in Connecticut has, by and large, been successful. It follows best practices. Legislative changes are made based on facts and data. Legislation derived from the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (which is why I support SB 387) is open to discussion and voting by members, including state legislators, prosecutors, public defenders, state agencies, judges, police, state advocates, victim advocates, community-based organizations, adults, and youth. Connecticut has been a model in the country on how to successfully and safely reduce the juvenile justice

system and expand diversion and services for youth. The legislation I oppose today is a departure from these practices.

- Now is the time to invest in issues that really matter to youth – mental health treatment, affordable housing, public education, job training, and healthcare. Now is not the time to roll back important advances in youth justice through this legislation.
- In the bills I oppose today, there are detrimental policy proposals that would do harm to our youth and set us back. In some of the proposals, there are some items worth considering, but the helpful pieces of these legislative proposals should come through the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee. Some examples include:
 - Increase flexibility when determining whether to detain a child.
 - This is directly linked to politicians proposing to extend the detention time longer than 6 hours. What happens in this time period? What's the time limit? Kids and families shouldn't have to wait for slow systems.
 - Increase the sharing of information concerning juvenile cases by law enforcement agencies.
 - This is harmful and aims to expand databases and surveillance of Black and Brown communities. Databases have been used to identify and deport undocumented immigrants.
 - Allow for global positioning (GPS) monitoring of juveniles under certain circumstances.
 - This practice is not good. It is expensive, ineffective, doesn't track in real time, and doesn't get to the root issue. Money can be better spent addressing the root issues instead of spending it on GPS.
 - Allow for automatic transfer to regular criminal docket for fourteen-year-olds if charged with certain violent crimes.
 - This is harmful because currently, you can't charge a 14-year-old as an adult. I don't believe a child that young should be in the adult system, as these systems are not built or equipped to serve children. Essentially, this would be rolling back the Raise the Age legislation that was passed in 2015-2016 (which has diverted many kids from the system and has nothing to do with the current climate of youth crime).
 - It's important to know that if 14-year-olds are charged as adults, they'd be sent to Manson Youth Institute, which, according to findings released by DOJ in December, was in violation of civil and disability rights in terms of its conditions and services for young people.
 - Establish a committee to evaluate the criminal justice system for juveniles and adults.
 - This purports to remove the Juvenile Justice and Policy Oversight Committee (JJPOC). This is wrong, and should not be done. This committee wouldn't have impacted people on it, various advocacy groups, etc. The JJPOC can and should do the job that's proposed for this group.

In conclusion, I oppose the aforementioned legislative proposals, with the exception of SB 387, which comes out of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee, through which all of these proposals should be vetted. The other bills are rooted in a misinformation campaign, lack sound analysis, and will lead to more of our youth becoming system-involved.

We GHIAA congregations stand ready to defeat policies that are rooted in racist rhetoric and faulty data. To learn more, watch this 7-minute video on GHIAA's position:

<https://vimeo.com/686784926>

Sincerely,

Mr. William Marut
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